

From: Han, Linda (DPH)
Sent: Tuesday, August 31, 2010 8:27 AM
To: Caloggero, Dina (DPH)
Subject: FW: EPA Funding for Informatics

I think this is N/A but I thought I should check with you first.

Janice Zanolli's old computer is still at her desk, so we can configure that for Kristen Kotewicz the new fellow?

Have fun buying books.
lh

From: Latshaw, Megan and Zarcone-Gagne,Patina [mailto:megan.latshaw@aphl.mmsend.com] **On Behalf Of** Latshaw, Megan and Zarcone-Gagne,Patina
Sent: Monday, August 30, 2010 6:06 PM
To: Han, Linda (DPH)
Subject: EPA Funding for Informatics



Dear State Environmental and Public Health Laboratory Directors and Delegates:

EPA recently released a solicitation notice for the "National Environmental Information Exchange Network Grant Program", available at: <http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&oppId=58613>.

These grants typically have substantial administrative hurdles but can provide individual state environmental laboratories an opportunity to improve LIMS, automate electronic data reporting, and participate in data exchange at the national level.

APHL encourages state laboratories to consider applying and is willing to help coordinate work amongst the states if funding becomes available. Please let Megan Latshaw (megan.latshaw@aphl.org) know by September 6 if you are interested in discussing such a collaborative effort.

Background

EPA's Environmental Information Exchange Network (Exchange Network)[1] is an Internet-based system used to securely exchange environmental and health data among EPA, states, tribes and territories, and other partners, leading to:

- Improved data quality - the Exchange Network helps to eliminate faulty and duplicative data entry, and transmission of invalid submissions.
- Better data integration - partners using the Exchange Network can now integrate environmental information across inconsistent sources, programs and databases.
- Timely availability of environmental data - the use of Web services and the Internet enable the Exchange Network to provide immediate access to published data.
- Reduced burden - partners using the Exchange Network can reduce the costs and burden associated with reporting data.
- Improved decision making - partners may use the Exchange Network to access integrated, high-quality data when making environmental decisions.
- Automated data submission and retrieval - Web services allow secure computer-to-computer connection on a scheduled basis.
- Security - the Exchange Network is protected by a centralized security system.
- Authorization and authentication - the Exchange Network allows partners to control access to their data.

Traditionally, funds have supported environmental programs in the states; however, innovative projects are encouraged. APHL recognizes that state environmental laboratories need funds to support electronic data reporting, sharing and integration (in an internet-and standards-based manner).

Many environmental laboratories have expressed the need to update their LIMS in order to support drinking water programs such as Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS)[2] and also to participate in national drinking water data exchanges of an emergency nature. This solicitation may be an opportunity not only for states to enhance to their individual LIMS but also to promote data exchange beyond the primary enforcement mandates (such as SDWIS) and to include more comprehensive measurement quality objectives in their state-to-state and state-to-federal agency data reporting.

Potential for Collaboration

If enough states are interested in applying for this funding and are interested in using a collaborative approach, APHL sees this as an opportunity to address environmental laboratory informatics issues at the national level. Although APHL would like to speak with laboratories interested in collaborating before providing any guidance, one suggestion has been to focus on getting LIMS to send SDWIS data in an XML[3] format to EPA's Exchange Network using standardized data elements.

Since SDWIS lacks quality control data and method quality objectives, its outputs do not satisfy other EPA or federal agency reporting requirements. Going a step further, APHL envisions a LIMS that could produce both SDWIS output files and more comprehensive files, automatically. An example of a modern, comprehensive data file is found in Version 1.4 of the EPA document "Draft Requirements for Environmental Response Laboratory Network Data Submissions." If laboratories acquire resources to adopt these standards, reporting and throughput would be rapidly improved, as would data review by responders or enforcement personnel.

While states would probably want to submit separate applications (consortium funding would reduce each states' allocated amount), each state could propose related projects, such as the ones suggested above, and include a small portion of funding to cover APHL's coordination role (which we envision to be convening states and relevant partners through conference calls and a Sharepoint site, but this can be discussed further with interested states).

Again, please let Megan (megan.latshaw@aphl.org) know by September 6 if you are interested in discussing such a collaborative effort.

Sincerely,
Megan Latshaw and Patina Zarcone-Gagne

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[1] <http://www.epa.gov/exchangenetwork/info/index.html>

[2] SDWIS receives and stores basic inventory and regulatory compliance data for all public drinking water systems in the country.

[3] XML (eXtensible Markup Language) files provides a mechanism to report data that require a relationship in order to accurately represent the data. Different XML files and even flat spreadsheet files can be converted from one to other easily so long as the data elements exist in the input and the output files.



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